

American Printing House for the Blind

History, Purposes, Policies, Etc.



LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

1931

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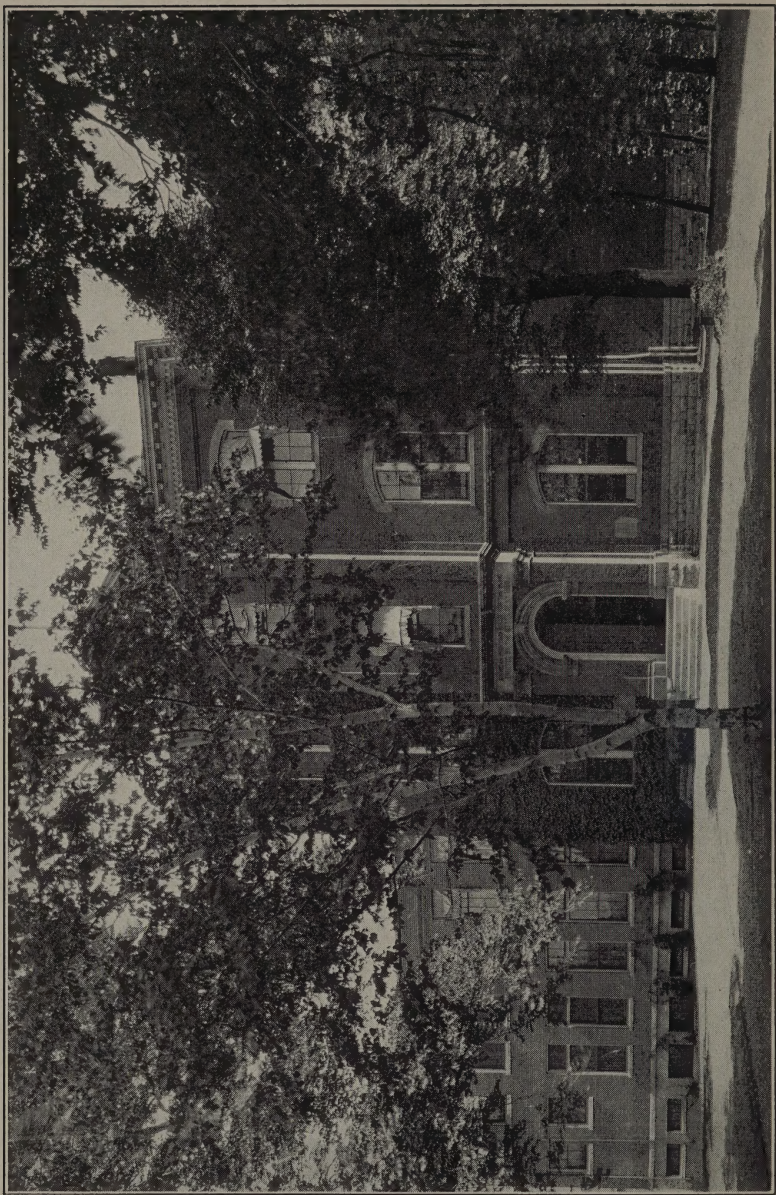
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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

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AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

American Printing House for the Blind

History, Purposes, Policies, Etc.

Prepared by a Special Committee of the
Board of Trustees of the American Print-
ing House for the Blind consisting of:

THOS. S. McALONEY, Chairman

EDWARD M. VAN CLEVE, Secretary

GEORGE S. WILSON

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FOREWORD

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the American Printing House for the Blind held July 7, 1930, a committee of three trustees was appointed to make a special study of the business with recommendations for the better conduct of its affairs. This committee met at Louisville January 26, 1931, and after spending several days in careful inquiry prepared a report, which is a clear statement of the history, purposes, policies, etc., of the Printing House. This deserves wide reading and is published for the information of the public.

The committee was:

Thos. S. McAloney, Chairman, Colorado

Edward M. Van Cleve, Secretary, New York

George S. Wilson, Indiana.

JOHN W. BARR, Jr., President.

A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY, PURPOSES, POLICIES, ETC., OF THE AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

In 1858 a charter was granted by the Legislature of Kentucky establishing the American Printing House for the Blind at Louisville, Kentucky. At first it had meager support. In 1865 the State of Kentucky contributed to the Printing House a sum of \$5.00 for every blind person in the state and additional income was secured by various means from other states. The American Association of Instructors of the Blind in 1876 appointed a committee to memorialize the Congress of the United States regarding the financing of the movement to publish books for use in the schools for the blind, and in 1879 action was taken by the Congress providing \$10,000 a year in perpetuity for the purpose of "aiding the education of the blind in the United States of America through the American Printing House for the Blind."

The State of Kentucky having provided the necessary funds, a site of 6½ acres on Frankfort Avenue in Louisville was purchased and a building erected thereon in 1883, which building remains the home of the Printing House. A further appropriation of \$25,000 was made in 1922 by the Kentucky Legislature for the erection of an addition to the building. Several years later the Trustees of the Printing House, out of funds accumulated through business operations not concerned with its work of providing literature and apparatus for the schools for the blind in the United States, put another story upon this addition at a cost of approximately \$14,350. This property is held in trust for the purposes indicated in the title and charter of the Printing House by the Trustees constituting the Executive Committee of the Board hereinafter described.

For forty years after the first Congressional appropriation, through economical and efficient management of this Printing House, the blind children attending schools of the country were supplied with text-books. At first these pupils numbered 2,180; by 1919 the enrollment in the schools for the blind had grown to approximately 6,000. Realizing the inadequacy of the \$10,000 annual Government contribution, the Congress in the latter year made an increased appropriation of \$40,000, and this was again added to in 1927 so that the American Printing House for the Blind now receives an annual appropriation of \$75,000 from the United States Government for the purpose of providing literature and apparatus for the education of the blind children of the United States.

MANAGEMENT

Management of the Printing House is vested by law in a Board of Trustees, consisting of seven persons citizens of Louisville and all the superintendents of the various public institutions for the education of the blind in the United States. Of these the members residing in Louisville constitute, under the By-Laws, the Executive Committee of the Board. None of the Trustees receives any compensation for his services to the Printing House. Meetings of the Board of Trustees are held annually in the city of Louisville, usually the first week of July, and at other times if deemed necessary. At the annual meetings reports are received and acted upon, policies are determined, and the officers are elected. The President is chosen from among the members residing in Louisville, the Vice-President from among the members who are superintendents of the schools for the blind. Its character as a nationally managed and nationally useful agency is thoroughly established. A Superintendent of the Printing House is elected biennially by the Board of Trustees and to him is entrusted the general management of the institution under the immediate direction of the Executive Committee.

HOW THE PRINTING HOUSE FUNCTIONS

The main business of the Printing House is the publication of text-books and supplementary reading matter and manufacture of apparatus to be used in the schools for the blind of the United States. Books to be so published are selected by a Publication Committee of the Board of Trustees elected biennially. This consists of three members assisted by an Advisory Committee of four additional trustees elected for the same term. The Committee seeks from the superintendents of the schools for the blind recommendations of books needed and after careful study selections are made. The cost of embossing in Braille on metal sheets, printing, binding and distributing copies of any book is so great relatively as compared with ink print publishing that exceptional care must be exercised in the choice of what books are to be produced. A Music Committee, consisting of three trustees, also chosen biennially, is charged with selection of music to be embossed in Braille. Apparatus used in the schools and manufactured at the Printing House consists of maps, charts, and some writing devices.

The elements which enter into the cost of producing books for the blind and which must be considered in connection with every publication are as follows: first, embossing and proofreading of plates from which printing is to be done; these processes must be performed with great skill and accuracy, therefore, expert workers are called for. Then come printing, binding, preparing for the market, and shipping. On an edition of 100 copies, let us say, of a third reader of 150 pages, 10½ and 11 inches in size, one side printing, bound in cloth, approximate cost percentages are: plate material, embossing and proofreading, 26.5%; paper and press work, 23.5%; binding, 25.7%; supervision and all other expenses, 24.3%.

A choice of a publication to be embossed having been made, notice is sent to all superintendents of schools requesting that orders be sent in advance for the purpose



THE PRINTING HOUSE IN WINTER

of making a fair estimate of the size of a first edition to be printed. Bulk of books in Braille precludes the possibility of maintaining any considerable stock of any title. First editions, therefore, usually number, for example, from 100 copies of a reader used by the larger number of pupils in grade classes to 15 copies of a text for high school use, and all the way between. After the first edition is exhausted a considerable time must elapse before a sufficient number of orders for more copies of any title can be gathered to make a reprinting possible without being excessively costly.

Each school for the blind in the United States receives in books, music and apparatus a proportion of the Government purchase of \$75,000 worth of such appliances for the education of the young blind based upon the ratio of its enrollment to the enrollment of all the schools for the blind in the United States. This ratio is computed on the first Monday in January of each year. Into the price of these purchases go only the elements of actual cost of production and no charge for plant erection or maintenance is included.

To provide beyond the housing afforded through the generosity of the State of Kentucky the necessary equipment, heat, light, janitor's service, and all other expenses incidental to carrying on its function as a publishing association not for profit, commissions to publish literature other than that needed in the schools are accepted and sales of its products are made. Through its work outside its service to the schools and to meet the requirements of the Government purchases, sufficient funds have been received by these means throughout the history of the Printing House to make possible its maintenance, thus contributing to the reduction in price of every book published or piece of tangible apparatus furnished. The more this additional business of the Printing House is increased, the more efficient it becomes, through development of expert, continued and full time work, the greater will be the amount of its output of every kind and the lower will be

the cost of such output. Every saving effected is put back into production. There is no profit to any one. The character of the Printing House as a purely philanthropic means of serving the blind can not be questioned.

POLICIES

As the first function of the Printing House has always been to serve the best needs of blind children in securing their education it was from its beginning concerned with improvement of methods and increasing of facilities in its work. The Trustees favored experimentation, looking to greater efficiency and always more and more output at less cost, yet always maintaining that quality must receive primary consideration. As early as 1908 the Printing House announced at the meeting of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind a beginning of printing on both sides of the paper, and through all the years thereafter concerned itself with this project among others in securing a better production. In 1928 a successful printing of interpointed Braille was attained in its publication of a book for the Braille Circulating Library of Richmond, Virginia, and later in the year by the issuance of the magazine, "The Reader's Digest." An increasing use of interpointing as its acceptability is demonstrated may be expected.

In pursuance of the policy to furnish always what the schools needed the Trustees deemed it their duty to print books in Line Type, New York Point, and American Braille, as long as these types were in use. This wasteful but necessary procedure continued until 1918. Then came the adoption of so-called Revised Braille, Grade 1½, as the American Standard, through agreement of the educators of the blind, and since there has come to be a vast increase in the service rendered.

With larger opportunities, purchases of supplies are made to better advantage than formerly, although the

policy has always been as it is now to purchase through competitive bidding. The staff of workers is being maintained and improved. Such workers in the nature of the case must be specially trained. To attract and hold these expert workers the policy is to make conditions at the Printing House as favorable as possible. Both the accounts and the manner of conducting the financial operations of the Printing House are under the close supervision of a firm of chartered public accountants and all operations connected with the expenditures under the Government appropriation are examined and approved by the officials of the Treasury Department of the United States.

An examination of the workings of the Printing House was made in November, 1930, by Mr. F. A. Birgfeld, the Chief Clerk of the Treasury Department, and he made in his official report among other comments the following statements regarding policies and accomplishments:

"A very careful examination was made of the books, records, accounts, etc., of the American Printing House for the Blind, and in addition basic principles were discussed with the public accountants who make and audit the report annually and who throughout the year are constantly in touch with the affairs of the institution.

"I found that the institution was maintaining a system of double entry bookkeeping and a series of vouchers and accounts carrying all necessary detail and explanation. Great care is exercised by all those responsible for the management to see that purchases are made from the lowest best bidder, that materials and supplies are up to the necessary standard, and that every other thing is done in order to be of advantage to the institution and its beneficiaries.

"As a matter of fact, after an exhaustive examination one marvels at the ultimate accomplishments, considering the limitation of funds.

"I have no hesitancy in saying in conclusion that I am satisfied the American Printing House for the Blind is being operated in the most economical and satisfactory manner for the good of the greatest possible number of the blind.

"Just one other word should be said about what is known as the general fund as contradistinguished from the United States Government account, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1929.

"There was a gross expenditure of \$130,114.67, or \$55,114.67 over and above the amount appropriated by the Government. From the general fund are paid such items as heat, light, power, water, telephones, repairs, equipment, machinery, accessories, and shipping expenses. For a plant of this size those expenses are necessarily appreciable.

* * *

"There is no doubt that those responsible are obtaining the greatest possible production, and that with the greatest possible economy."

